



Wyoming Connections Academy is a statewide virtual school authorized as a distance learning program of Big Horn #1 School District since 2011. Wyoming Connections Academy partners with Pearson Virtual Schools to provide a comprehensive, full service public virtual school. Wyoming Connections Academy serves approximately 670 students in the 2021-22 school year in grades K-12 across Wyoming. Since Wyoming Connections Academy opened its doors in 2011, approximately 5,000 students have chosen to attend for their public education.

Wyoming Connections Academy has proven to be the best school option for a variety of students. Some examples include parents who desire more flexibility with their child's education, children who have been subjected to bullying, those with medical or health concerns, students with exceptional talents in the arts and athletics, military families, geographically isolated ranching families and many more.

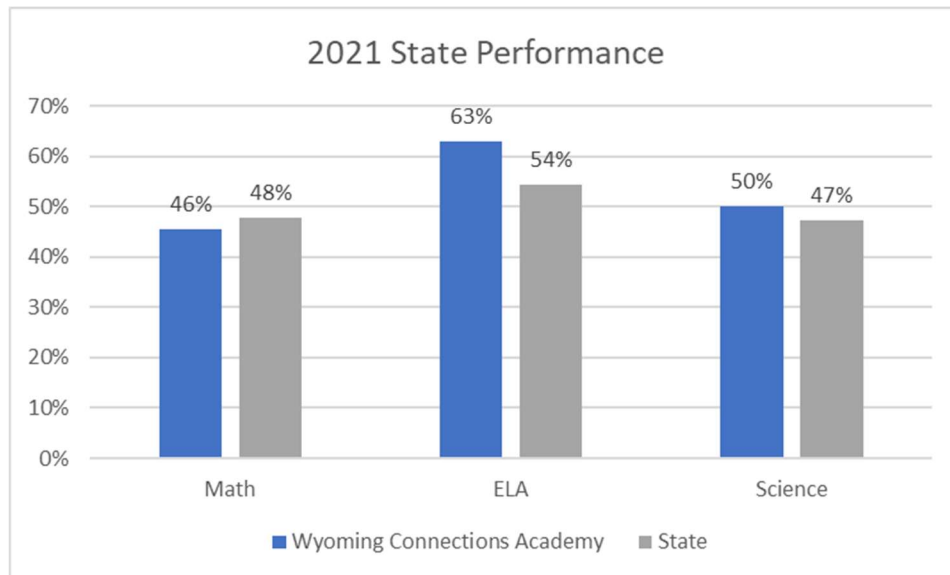
These Wyoming Connections Academy students, and students in virtual programs throughout the state, deserve equitable funding to ensure virtual public schools can provide the best teaching and learning opportunities for teachers and students.

#### **Students' Educational Path to Success at Wyoming Connections Academy**

- Professional Teaching Standards Board Certified Teachers
- Student services including special education
- Counseling for personal and social development as well as career and college planning
- Learning management systems
- Student technology, student help desk, and a facility
- Curriculum
- Administrative Services
- Outreach, enrollment, and academic placement
- Field trips and clubs
- State reporting and state testing

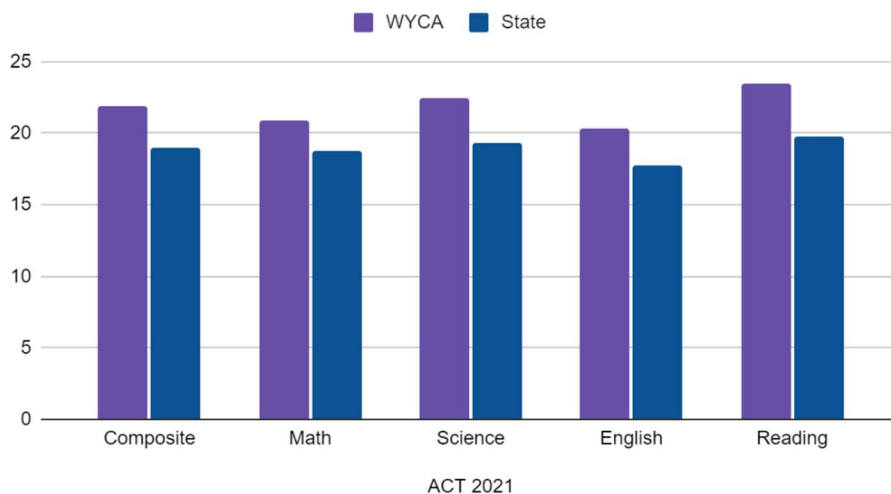
### **Wyoming Connections Academy 2020-2021 State Assessment Results Compared to State**

The Wyoming Test of Proficiency and Progress (WY-TOPP) is proctored in person for students in grades third through 10th across Wyoming for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Science is assessed in grades 4, 8 and 10th.



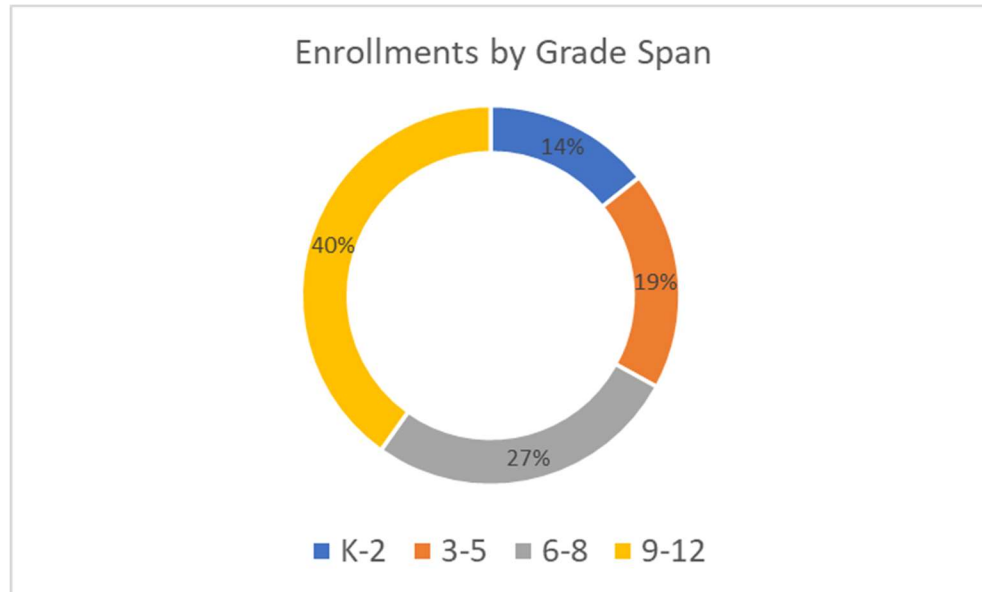
The ACT is proctored in person across Wyoming for Wyoming Connections Academy 11th graders. As shown in the chart, Wyoming Connections Academy students significantly exceed the state average in reading, exceed in science, and is almost at state average in Math.

### **WYCA and State ACT Scores Spring 2021**



### ***Students Served by Wyoming Connections Academy (2022)***

The greatest enrollment demand is for high school where 40% of our students are served in grades 9-12 followed by 27% in grades 6-8; 19% in grades 3-5; and, 14% in grades kindergarten through second grade.



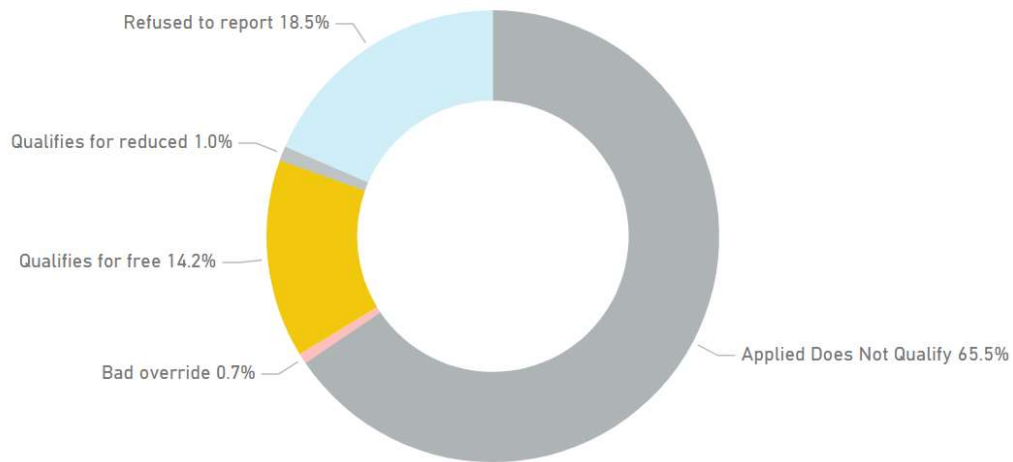
Of the 670 students attending Wyoming Connections Academy this school year, 19% receive special education services.

The following chart outlines the disability categories. Many of these students if served in a traditional face to face classroom may require additional interventions such as an aide to provide support for behavioral issues. The environment of an online classroom helps many students be successful:

Disability	Enrollments
Autism	16
Developmentally Delayed	1
Emotionally Impaired	6
Hearing Impaired	3
Multiple Disabilities	1
Other Health Impaired	12
Specific Learning Disability	44
Speech/Language Impaired	18

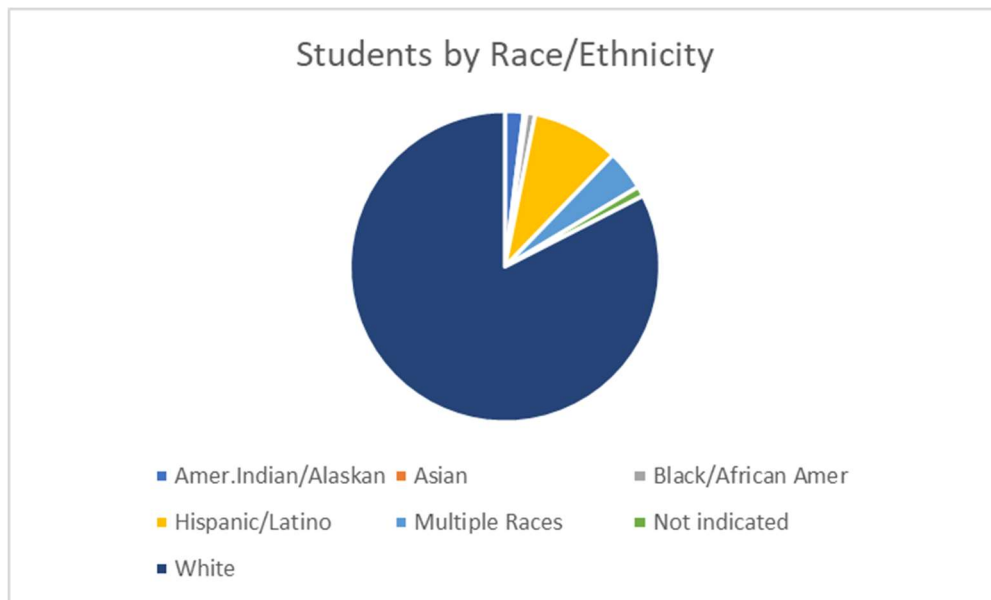
### ***Students Served by Wyoming Connections Academy (2022) (cont)***

*FARM Eligibility, Sept. 2021*



Wyoming Department of Education lists 91,938 public students for the 2020-21 school year. Wyoming Connections Academy serves many different types of students and mirrors the state averages for the populations served.

### ***Student Demographics for Wyoming Connections Academy (2022)***



## Student Equitable Funding for Wyoming Connections Academy

Equitable funding is needed to provide a high-quality, full-service educational experience for students. All students should be equitably funded when making the school choice that best meets their educational needs. Full-time virtual schools have similar costs to traditional brick and mortar schools, and several expense categories are different and are not found in a traditional school setting.

- a. The Wyoming Funding Model: The Wyoming Funding Model for school districts is a complex system of funding schools based on a cost of education study done by outside consultants. Many factors in the funding model determine each district's funding level, as well as each school within the district. Virtual education funding is not allowed to be a separate school but must be added to schools in a district.
- b. What makes the funding more complex when adding the ADM (average daily membership) of the virtual students to the brick & mortar schools – is that in Big Horn County School District #1, two of the three schools do not hit the minimum number of teachers that a middle school and a high school require in the funding model.
  - Rocky Mountain Middle School's current ADM generates 4.43 FTE core teachers, 1.46 FTE specialist teachers. The model then supplies 2.11 FTE additional teachers to get to the minimum 8 FTE teachers Middle Schools are given.
  - Rocky Mountain High School's current ADM generates 5.62 FTE core teachers, 1.86 FTE specialist teachers, .18 FTE CTE teachers. The model then supplies 2.34 FTE additional teachers to get to the minimum 10 FTE teachers High School are given.
  - Any additional virtual education student ADM added to Big Horn County School District #1 brick & mortar student ADM does not generate any additional teacher funding until the threshold number of students needed to reach the 8 or 10 teacher FTE is reached. The model then provides an additional teacher for every 21 student ADM added to each school.
  - Currently the brick & mortar schools for BHCS D #1 have been in a declining enrollment. It therefore takes more virtual education kids to reach the minimum number of teachers.
  - This makes it difficult to calculate how much the district receives for each virtual education student. A straightforward method to calculate the brick & mortar funding; separate the cost per student compared to a cost—per-virtual student does not exist.
- c. Cost Savings: One of the biggest misconceptions of virtual schools is they must be cheaper or less expensive to operate. This could not be further from the truth. Virtual education costs include a significant technology platform, curriculum, educators, intervention programs and a physical office space. It would be very hard as a district to determine where there might be areas that can be found to give potential cost savings.
  - Virtual programs do not have the same type of costs that brick & mortar schools have. One example is testing of students for WYTOPP. The brick & mortar schoolteachers from the building can do the testing in their own buildings. However, virtual education students must be tested in a rented testing site. The virtual education teachers must travel to those sites to administer those tests.
  - Students coming from other school districts may cost the state less in virtual programs than in their brick & mortar school. An example is Wyoming Connections Academy has

22 students who live in Teton County. The state saves by this school choice. The Wyoming Connections Academy students is funded for a regional cost adjust of 1.00 compared to Teton's 1.59 (2021-22 Funding Model).

d. Summary of virtual school expenditures:

- Personnel Costs – Salaries and benefits to attract and retain high quality teaching and administrative staff
- Instructional Support- Professional development, PLCs, instructional materials
- Curriculum and Platform- Online instructional courses, SIS, physical materials sent to students, and ongoing research to meet best practices and state standard updates
- Facility Costs – Rent, utilities, maintenance, storage, etc.
- State Mandated Testing Costs – Rental of facilities, travel of staff to sites, testing materials throughout the state
- Technology Supports – Student computer and internet subsidies, IT support, school hardware and software, etc.
- Administrative Functions- Human resources, payroll, accounting, student reporting, school handbooks, etc.
- Federally Mandated Special Education Services – Psychologists, speech therapists, behavioral therapists, occupational therapists, and other certified professionals and monitoring as needed to fulfill student service requirements
- Parent Outreach, Enrollment and Placement – Application, enrollment and onboarding support for students that also includes academic placement support
- Student Field Trips and Clubs – Ongoing extracurricular opportunities for students and families based on their interests as well as staff travel expenditures to oversee these activities

## Wyoming Connections Academy Teachers & Staff

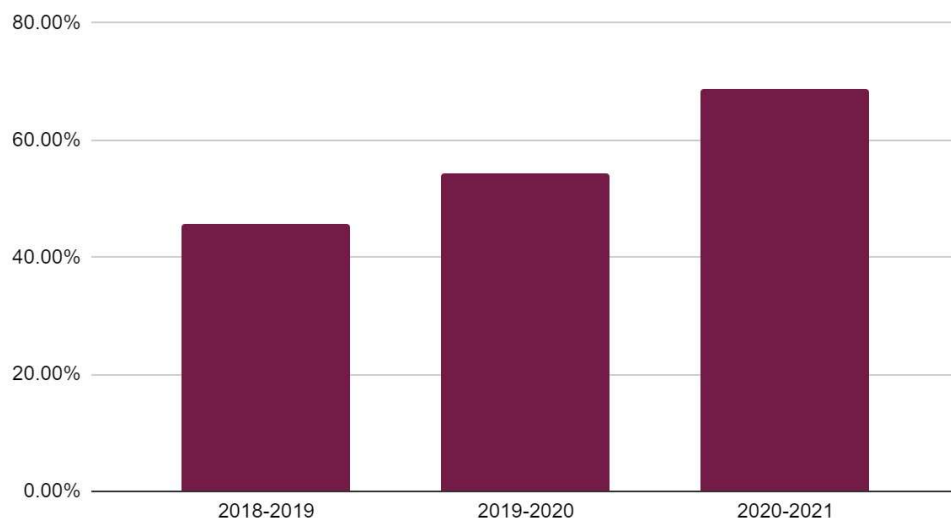
All 29 teachers, counselors and administrators are certified by the Professional Teaching Standards Board with current certifications. In addition, 55% of the staff have Masters's Degrees; 20% of staff have multiple Master's degrees or additional courses and credits beyond their Master's degree; and one staff has an Education Specialist degree.

- 5 Elementary Teachers
- 4 Middle School Core Content Teachers
- 7 High School Core Content Teachers, 1 Adjunct Teacher
- 5 Special Education Teachers
- 2 School Counselors
- 1 Full-time Advisory teacher
- 1 Principal, 1 Assistant Principal, 1 Manager of Special Education, 1 Manager of Counseling Services
- 2 Administrative Assistants and 1 Special Education Administrative Assistant
- 17 virtual classroom teachers serve approximately 600 students. This is a ratio of 1 teacher to 35 students.

## Wyoming Connections Academy Graduation Data

The following graph is the 4-year cohort graduation rate. It is important to note that mobility impacts the graduation rate. If students are enrolled in Wyoming Connections Academy for all four years, the graduation rate was 87.5% in 2020.

WYCA Graduation Rates



## ***Wyoming Connections Academy 2021 Parent Satisfaction Survey Results***

From the quick-witted to the quiet thinkers—from the art lovers to the sports fanatics—every student at Wyoming Connections Academy has individual passions and distinctive personalities. But they're all learning in a way that works best for who they are. And they're growing into the person they want to become. And the parent survey results listed below show how Wyoming Connections Academy is working for Wyoming families.

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Of parents are satisfied with the helpfulness of their child's teacher.



Of parents agree the program provides more involvement in their student's education.



Of parents agree their student is making good progress at Connections Academy.

Based on 2021 Parent Satisfaction Survey